Threat to Tea Garden Executives in Assam

2538. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of tea garden executives in Assam kidnapped and those killed by the militants during the last one year;

(b) whether extortion notices of Rupees five to fifty lakhs are sent to most of the tea estates in Assam; and

(c) the action proposed to end the sense of insecurity in the tea gardens who are facing problems from militants?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI I.D. SWAMI): (a) As per information available, 26 tea garden executives in Assam were kidnapped, and 6 killed by militant outfits during 1999 and upto 31st July, 2000.

(b) Some cases of extortion of money from tea estates in Assam by the militant outfits including ULFA have come to the notice of the Government. However, exact amount of extortion is not known as the management of tea estates are hesitant to share information with the Government.

(c) The "Assam Tea Plantation Security Force (ATPSF) was set up to provide security *to* vulnerable tea gardens. The tea industry has been advised by the State Government to induct the Assam Tea Plantation Security Force in the tea gardens of Barak Valley. The State Government has been sensitised and action taken against militant outfits, indulging in extortion in tea gardens.

Atal-Farooq Treaty

2539. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Governments attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Atal-farooq treaty in the offing" as appeared in the "Economic Times" dated the 19th July, 2000;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether details of the proposed accord have been finalised and if so, the basis of this accord; and

(d) whether the details of the agreement would be placed before the Parliament?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI .CHENNAMANENI VIDYA SAGAR RAO): (a) to (d) Government is aware of the media reports in this regard. The Chief Minister, J and K called on the Prime Minister on 17 July 2000. It was mutually agreed that the Government of India and Government of Jammu and Kashmir will be in touch with each other on the subject of devolution of powers to the State. However details and modalities of such devolution were not discussed.

Hurrlyat Conference

2540. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Hurriyat conference leaders have been pressing hard for the inclusion, of Pakistan in resolving what they perceive the "disputed legacy of Kashmir";

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government have ruled out any talks over Kashmir particularly against the backdrop of the existing atmosphere of Pakistan's hostile posturing towards India;

(d) whether Government have any latest and fresh initiative for the proposed peace parleys with Kashmir-Centric leaders; and

(e) if so, the salient features thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYA SAGAR RAO): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. However no proposal for considering associating Pakistan in any talks that Government may have with such people is under consideration of the Government.

(c) Indian has all along maintained that the question of a